

Analysis of K-Pop Dance as an Academic Subject

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Abstract

This study examined whether K-pop dance is qualified as an academic subject and how university students perceive K-pop dance as a liberal art subject. The survey was conducted with 138 students. Among the total of 138, 40 participants were male, and 53 participants were female. Fourteen(14) participants had experience with K-pop classes, and 124 participants did not have any experience with K-pop dance classes. According to the study, K-pop is a form of Korean culture that adds unique cultural and social characteristics to Koreans. It is in the cultural and art education category. In addition, K-pop dance is a socio-cultural phenomenon characterized by dance. However, K-pop dance is not qualified as an academic subject because it lacks theoretical foundations. The survey result also revealed that the students did not perceive that K-pop dance had personal, aesthetic, social, or educational value. They did not want to take a class if K-pop dance is offered as an academic subject in liberal art class. When analyzing the data by gender and experiences with dance classes, there was a difference based on gender in the two questions. In the case of females, they responded to having fun and joy from K-pop dance, while male respondents did not. Regarding the learners' interest in K-pop dance class, female respondents were more optimistic about the learner interest than male respondents. In conclusion, K-pop dance is a sociocultural phenomenon, and many informal online courses are created daily, spreading everywhere. However, the status of K-pop dance as an academic area is not set up yet.

Keywords: K-Pop Dance, Liberal Arts, Curriculum, Education, Social Value, Educational Value, Practical Dance, Commercial Art, College Education, Perceptions

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

K-pop is a popular public culture and a big part of social phenomenon. Recently, K-Pop significantly impacted teenagers and all age groups, bringing enormous economic and social success to society. In particular, K-pop dance spreads widely online and has become a new dance genre, gaining global interest and popularity. People practice K-pop dance for various reasons, such as careers, entertainment, and healing. K-pop dance is also a communication tool among people who enjoy art and dance worldwide. Based on its popularity, educational areas also adopted K-pop dance for classes. According to [1-2], schools and private academies that teach K-Pop dance increases yearly by collaborating K-pop dance with other subject areas such as music, art, and physical education. Since K-pop dance significantly impacts young people, public schools

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began to provide K-Pop dance classes to students as extra-curricular activities and regular courses [2]. [3] claims that K-pop dance is an educational program that all generations can enjoy and learn. It has cultural and educational value and can be used as a communication and healing tool for all age groups.

Recently, higher educational organizations such as colleges and universities have recognized K-pop dance as a practical dance genre and started to provide courses for professional degrees. Researchers on practical dances [3-4] claim that K-pop dance has transformed from a simple entertainment culture to a professional dance genre with educational and academic value. Practical dance is a dance genre in which everyone voluntarily participates in dancing while enjoying themselves [4]. Practical dance shows informal and accessible voluntary physical activity, while artistic dance is for professional dancers in which physical activity is done formally, intentionally, and deliberately. Practical dances include hip-hop, girl's hip-hop, popping, locking, waacking, soul, house, krump, and urban dance. It is specialized according to styles and techniques. Professional education opportunities for practical dances have expanded to high schools, universities, and social education centers since it was established in the street dance department at the Seoul National University of Arts in 2007. As K-pop dance has gained public interest and popularity, it is recognized as a practical dance, giving educational opportunities in recognition of economic success. According to [5], the K-pop culture represents the country, and the K-pop business is beyond the success of individual companies. There are many formal and informal educational opportunities to learn K-pop dance. K-pop dance plays an important role in society beyond simple hobbies, and various learning opportunities are in need. Therefore, systematic and sustainable K-pop dance education programs should be developed and available around the country and overseas. Recently, universities started to offer K-pop dance classes as a selective subject of liberal arts, but studies focusing on K-pop dance as a formal education program are rare.

1.2 Research purposes

Many studies on professional dances belong to academic areas such as physical education or art. However, few studies on practical dances focus on their appropriateness as an academic subject in higher education organizations. In particular, researches on K-pop dance as an academic subject are rare. People tend to perceive public art as a subculture, not an academic subject. Therefore, examining whether K-pop dance is recognized as an academic subject and qualified as a class in higher education institutions is necessary.

Based on the research purpose, there are two research questions proposed.

1. Is K-pop dance qualified as a college course based on the elements of the academic subject?
2. How do students perceive K-pop dance?

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

A practical dance that is also called street dance has grown from the year 1970 until the early 2000s. In the 2000s, many scholars and dancers gradually conducted academic research, focusing on professional education programs of practical dances and professional manpower training of dancers. With the development of popular arts in the 21st century, practical dance education classes have increased and gained positive evaluation by academic areas. The practical dance genre was accepted as one of the school education programs [6]. The growth of K-pop music came along with the growth of practical art. K-pop music in the 2000s started with dance music and achieved significant innovation in the K-pop industry. K-pop dance choreography became popular based on the popularity of dance music [7]. K-pop dance is a mixture of modern and other dances and has become a unique genre based on mass media [7-8]. K-pop dance showed a unique characteristic: all dance genres are mixed and reborn as a new art form. It is an era in which K-pop is recognized as a global pop using

the online platform. According to the research in 2019, Korean video content was the highest in the order of "OTT81, followed by "TV" and "SNS," and music content was the highest in contact through online mobile platforms [1]. The Popular K-pop group's music video surpassed 100 million views on YouTube four days after it was released and won the Top Social Artist Award at the Billboard Music Awards in 2018[1]. K-pop fans shared the choreography through social media, and social media became a communication channel for K-pop fans. People shared and monitored their dances to communicate with others online. In addition, videos and comments shared in such a process were linked as content and replicated in a virtual space again, creating synergy. Every day, informal education programs are pouring through online channels, and the number of online content has increased rapidly in quantity and quality continuously on YouTube. People practice dance for various reasons. An informal form of classes is helpful for fun or hobby. However, if the need for K-pop classes increases, the courses should be offered offline in the curriculum. Dance is a practical subject that requires apprenticeship and personal training. Therefore, offline courses are more suitable than online classes for achieving educational goals. As K-pop culture became a social phenomenon, formal education programs were offered in public schools and higher education institutions. However, according to [5], the term K-pop dance is not officially used as a class title in college yet, and it still needs to be fixed as an academic subject in education. [1] claims that the class title for K-pop dance class is usually written as practical dance or hip-hop in the standard curriculum. For fixing as a course in formal education areas, K-pop dance still needs to be entirely accepted as a class title in the college curriculum.

According to [6], since 2010, K-pop culture has become famous beyond the musical genre and has been adopted as a liberal arts subject in universities and public education. Many studies on K-pop dance claim that it has social and cultural values and is worth teaching at schools. Recently, a K-pop dance class was offered as a K-MOOC class at a college level and officially recognized as a college class. Since dance education aims to learn how to express one's feelings through movement, it can be summarized as improving body expression ability. There are many studies on the relationship between physical exercise and academic achievement. However, most of the studies are papers investigating the relationship between activities in sports such as basketball, volleyball, and soccer, and there are few papers exploring the relationship between dance activities and academic achievement. In particular, there needs to be a clear study of the relationship between practical dance and academic achievement[6]. [7] appeals that K-Pop dance has educational value in cultural art education. Culture and arts education aims for all citizens to enjoy culture and arts and foster creativity. All citizens are guaranteed equal opportunities to systematically learn and educate culture and arts throughout their lives according to their interests and aptitudes, regardless of age, gender, disability, social status, economic conditions, physical conditions, and residential areas (Article 3 of the basic principles of culture and arts education). K-pop dance is a cultural dance that brings everyone together regardless of country or generation. It is competent and sufficiently valuable as a culture and arts education program. K-POP dance may be challenging to follow due to the nature of the choreography made through a high-level training process. Still, if the dance is modified according to age for educational purposes, it can play a sufficient role as an educational tool[8].

3. INTRODUCTION RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Participants

A total of 138 college students participated in this study. Among the total of 138, 40 participants were male, and 53 participants were female. Fourteen(14) participants had experience with K-pop dance classes, and 124 participants did not have any experience with K-pop dance classes.

Table 1. Research participants

Experience	Male	Female	Total
Yes	2	12	14
No	38	41	124
Total	40	53	138

3.2 Research method and tool

A survey method and literature analysis were used in this study. Related literature was analyzed to determine if K-pop dance qualifies as an academic subject. The online survey questionnaire was developed and uploaded to the website. The participants were asked to fill out the survey on the web, and the data was collected online. The collected data was directly put into the excel format, and the researcher transferred the data into the SPSS. The research purposes and procedures were explained to the participants before collecting the data, and their participation in the survey was voluntary.

The academic subject elements written by [9] and survey questionnaires were used as research tools. The researcher developed a framework to explore whether K-pop dance is qualified as a college class based on the elements of the academic subject[9]. The framework includes cultural elements, social support, being selected as an academic subject, and reasonable elements. The framework is presented below in Table 2. The survey instrument was developed and used for the study. Twenty-two (22) questions were asked about participants' perceptions of K-pop dance with five aspects. The questions were reviewed by three K-pop professionals who have taught K-pop classes for more than 20 years. There were seven questions about personal value, five about aesthetic value, three about social value, six about educational value, and two about willingness to take K-pop classes. The survey questions are as follows presented in Tale 2.

Table 2. The framework of elements of the academic subject [9]

Elements	Explanation
Cultural elements	The contents of the subject include the culture of the society.
Social support	Social members must agree on the importance of the subject and recognize it as an academic area.
Being selected as an academic subject	An academic subject should be selected through a decision-making process by experts in the academic area.
Logical theoretical foundation	An academic subject needs a logical theoretical foundation.

Table 3. Survey questions

Category	Questions
Personal value	Seven questions
Aesthetic value	Five questions
Social value	Three questions
Educational Value	Six questions
Willingness to take classes	Two questions
Total	22 questions

3.3 Data analysis

Technical analysis using means and standard deviation was used to examine the tendency of the participants' perceptions. A T-test was used to examine whether there are differences in their answers by gender and experiences with K-pop classes. The analyzed data were presented in tables and figures.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Analysis by the elements of the academic subject

Table 4. Participants' perceptions about K-pop dance by category

Category	Research	Contents
Cultural elements	Sustainability study of K-pop dance through New Media, Ph.D. thesis, Korea University(Kim Hye-jin, 2019)	Experiencing and implementing K-pop from the perspective of culture and arts education can be expanded to cultural and artistic activities or fall into the culture and arts education category.
Social support	The Development Process and Value Recognition of Hip Hop Dance in Korea, Ph.D. Thesis, Sejong University (Choi Jong Hwan, 2012)	K-pop is a form of Korean culture that add unique cultural and social characteristics to Koreans.
	The Development Process and Value Recognition of Hip Hop Dance in Korea, Ph.D. Thesis, Sejong University (Choi Jong Hwan, 2012)	K-pop dance is a socio-cultural phenomenon that is characterized by dance. K-pop dance is spread through voluntary participation. As the K-pop phantom is formed around the relatively young age group, it is characterized by participating in actual dancing.
Being selected as an academic subject	Sustainability study of K-pop dance through New Media, Ph.D. thesis, Korea University (Kim Hye-jin, 2019)	K-pop's cover dance or cover songs through YouTube are closer to "preference" than learning. The educational goal of the curriculum should be clear. Therefore, hobbies cannot be a goal.
	A Study on Educational Value Using K-POP Dance, <i>The Journal of Dance Education</i> , Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 31-45 (Choi Chang-Yong, 2021).	K-pop would have sufficient educational value if it customized education by age, focusing on lifelong education.
Logical theoretical foundation	No study exists	

When analyzing the responses to the elements of the academic subject, it was shown that K-pop dance has cultural elements and social support. However, it is not selected as an academic subject and lacks theoretical foundations. Based on the literature analysis, K-pop dance has cultural elements. Literature related to -K-pop dance claims that K-pop itself is a culture of society and a phenomenon of society. K-pop is a form of Korean culture that adds unique cultural and social characteristics to Koreans. It is in the cultural and art education category. Regarding social support, K-pop dance is a socio-cultural phenomenon characterized by dance. K-pop dance is spread through voluntary participation. The K-pop phantom is formed around the relatively young age group, characterized by participating in actual dancing. Regarding the academic subject, the literature

claims that K-pop dance is a “preference” rather than learning. Since hobbies cannot be a goal, they cannot be selected as an academic subject. On the other hand, Choi(2021) claims that K-pop would have sufficient educational value if it customized education by age, focusing on lifelong education. Regarding the theoretical foundations, there was no literature or textbooks for K-pop dance, while standard textbooks explain the theoretical foundation for other classical dances.

4.2 Survey analysis

When analyzing the participants’ perceptions of K-pop dance, they do not perceive it as having educational or social value. In detail, the participants responded that K-pop dance is not suitable for a college subject because it does not have educational value nor is worth learning. It also does not have an academic foundation as a college subject. In addition, they perceive that K-pop dance does not have aesthetic value as an art because it does not stimulate individuals' emotional and spiritual functions. More importantly, the participants were unwilling to take K-pop classes as college courses or in private academies. Detailed analysis for each category is as below.

4.2.1 Perceptions of personal value

When analyzing the data on personal value, the mean was low as 3.59. The respondent agreed that K-pop dance provides them with pleasure, but it did not fulfill their personal life, such as emotional needs, cultural life, and aesthetic needs.

Table 5. Personal value (N= 138)

Questions	Mean	S.D
1. K-pop dance helps to purify my emotions	3.39	1.193
2. K-pop dance satisfies my emotional needs.	3.45	1.279
3. K-pop dance satisfies my aesthetic needs.	3.55	1.239
4. K-pop dance provides me with pleasure.	4.02	1.149
5. K-pop dance enriches my life.	3.43	1.273
6. Enjoying K-pop dances give me the feeling of having cultural life.	3.72	1.170
Total	3.59	1.217

4.2.2 Figures Perceptions of aesthetic value

When analyzing the aesthetic value of K-pop dance, the respondents also did not perceive that K-pop dance has aesthetic value. They did not think that it was an outcome of professional creation; it did not show the aesthetic inspiration of the artists. They may feel that K-pop is a part of popular culture that everybody enjoys.

Table 6. Aesthetic value (N= 138)

Questions	Mean	S.D
1. K-pop dance is the outcome of professional creation.	3.61	1.190
2. K-pop dance has novelty and uniqueness.	3.70	1.211
3. K-pop dance expresses aesthetic inspiration.	3.55	1.227
4. K-pop dance expresses an aesthetic value.	3.69	1.105
5. K-pop dance inspires spirit and senses.	3.62	1.209
Total	3.63	1.18

4.2.3 Perceptions of social value

When analyzing the questions about social value, the results also showed low mean scores. The respondents did not consider K-pop dance a tool to connect with others. It does not affect society and thus does not have social value.

Table 7. Social value (N= 138)

Questions	Mean	S.D
1. K-pop dance helps with making relationships with others.	3.25	1.279
2. K-pop dance affects various areas of society.	3.74	1.155
3. K-pop dance has social value.	3.55	1.108
Total	3.51	1.180

4.2.4 Perceptions of educational value

Examining the questions about educational value and wiliness to take classes in detail, the respondents showed low mean scores such as 3.40 and 2.80. In particular, the respondents did not think that K-pop dance has educational value and it is not suitable for providing as a college subject. However, they agree that instructors must have high professional skills to teach the class. When asked about their wiliness to take K-pop classes, the respondents did not want to take classes. Because of that, they do not think it is qualified as a college subject. When analyzing the data by experiences with K-pop dance classes, there were no differences in the participants' responses.

Table 8. Educational Value

Questions	Mean	S.D
1. K-pop dance is worth learning.	3.40	1.229
2. K-pop dance is suitable for adoption as a college subject.	2.89	1.311
3. K-pop dance, a field of practical art, has a sufficient academic foundation as a college curriculum.	3.07	1.128
4. K-pop dance has educational value.	3.01	1.196
5. K-pop dance is an area that can bring about learners' interest.	3.38	1.070
6. K-pop dance is an area that requires the professionalism of instructors.	4.00	1.127
Willingness to take a K-pop class		
7. I am willing to take a K-pop dance class if it is provided at the university.	2.43	1.387
8. If I have a chance, I am willing to take a K-pop dance class at a private academy or cultural center.	2.35	1.421
Total	3.06	1.233

4.3 Perceptions by gender

When analyzing the data by gender, there was a statistical difference in question no.3(K-pop dance provides me with fun and joy) in the personal value category($p < 0.00$). In detail, female participants perceived that K-pop dance is fun and gives them pleasure, while male respondents did not. It is because of that female students enjoy dances more than male students. In addition, there was a difference in the responses about the learners' interest by gender in the category of educational value. Female respondents perceive K-pop dance stimulates learners' interest, while male respondents do not. Female respondents seem to perceive that people enjoy K-pop dance as they do.

Table 9. Differences by gender

Gender	Question	Mean	S.D
	Q3(K-pop provides me with fun and joy.)	3.73	1.267
Female(53)		4.49	0.724
Male (85)	Q19	3.65	1.152
	(K-pop stimulates learner's interest)	4.25	0.082

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined whether K-pop dance is suitable for academic subjects based on the elements as an academic subject and how university students perceive pop dance as a liberal art subject. According to the study, K-pop dance has cultural elements and social support. However, it is not selected as an academic subject and lacks theoretical foundations. K-pop is a culture of society and a phenomenon of society. K-pop is a form of Korean culture that adds unique cultural and social characteristics to Koreans. It is in the cultural and art education category. In addition, K-pop dance is a socio-cultural phenomenon characterized by dance. K-pop dance is spread through voluntary participation. The K-pop phantom is formed around the relatively young age group, represented by participating in actual dancing. Regarding the students' perceptions of K-pop dance, the students did not perceive that K-pop dance had personal, aesthetic, social, or educational value. They did not want to take a class if K-pop dance is offered as an academic subject in liberal art class. When analyzing the data by gender and experiences with dance classes, there was a difference based on gender in the two questions. In the case of females, they responded to having fun and joy from K-pop dance, while male respondents did not. Regarding the learners' interest in K-pop dance class, female respondents were more optimistic about the learners' interest than male respondents.

In conclusion, K-pop dance has huge phantoms that voluntarily participate in all the content. K-pop dance itself is a culture of society and a social phenomenon. However, it is not qualified as an academic subject due to the lack of theoretical foundations and educational goals; Literature claims that hobbies cannot be an educational goal. Students also did not perceive that K-pop dance is not suitable for college courses and were unwilling to take the courses if offered as a class.

Even though K-pop dance is very popular as learning content and many informal online courses are created daily, people need to recognize it as an official course and an academic area that still needs to be set up. In people's minds, K-pop dance is not an official dance genre but an enjoyable extra-curricular activity and a kind of hobby. However, many aspects show that K-pop dance is qualified as a college subject. As the study shows, K-pop is a culture, and there is social support. Many people want to learn how to dance K-pop, and voluntary participation in learning has an important element for learning the subject. People accept learning, reserve judgment on the content, and focus on its advantages. People think of individual goals' advantages and have no prejudice against the content. Since learners accept learning and are willing to take classes, it is suitable as an academic subject.

Therefore, people in the dance area must work on setting up the logical and theoretical framework for K-pop dance. Officially, many classes are offered in cultural and lifelong education centers, but no textbook is found. Dance is a practical genre; performance and practice are central to learning, and people teach through performance. However, a form of the proper class should provide textbooks and educational goals. The academic subject needs logical and theoretical explanations about the subject as well. Classical arts and sports areas are performance-based subjects with textbooks and theoretical backgrounds. In the case of physical education, there are knowledge and skills necessary to teach. Physical learning is learning related to the use of body muscles. There are specific steps to learning physical activities[10]. The first step is recognition. In this

step, learners must correctly describe how physical tasks should be performed. This level is similar to the level of knowledge in cognitive learning. The second step is to learn individual components. If learners require complex physical activities at once, learners will suffer frustration. At the individual component level, learners should be asked to gradually divide complex activities into individual activities and do them one at a time to learn the entire activities. The third step is integration. People who learn the new exclusion function are integrated without stopping each part of learning. There is no part separated when activities are performed smoothly. The last step is free to practice. In this step, at the level of free practice, the learner acts alone without instructions or supervision from the teacher. If the learner internalizes the process, few instructions are given. In this level of learning, learners learn physical functions independently and modify behavior according to their tastes. For now, the provided classes only focus on modeling and practice, even though K-pop dance has gained significant support from the public and placed a part of the culture. People want to share their learning experiences; in some sense, K-pop dance is qualified as a teaching subject but has yet to be an academic subject. Colleges and lifelong education centers provide K-pop dance as official college-level classes. Therefore, researchers need to put effort into setting up the theoretical backgrounds and standard forms of official courses with appropriate educational goals and contents to be fully qualified as an academic subject.

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